

BEFORE THE PUBLIC DISCLOSURE COMMISSION  
OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

IN THE MATTER OF ENFORCEMENT	)	PDC CASE NO: 00-866
ACTION AGAINST	)	
	)	
Christine Ohlsen	)	Notice of Administrative
and	)	Charges
Richard Ridgeway	)	
	)	
Respondents.	)	
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IT IS ALLEGED as follows:

**I.**  
**JURISDICTION**

Jurisdiction of this proceeding is based on Chapter 42.17 RCW, the Public Disclosure Commission, Chapter 34.05, Administrative Procedure Act, and Title 390 WAC.

**II.**  
**LAW**

RCW 42.17.130 states in part: “No elective official nor any employee of his office nor any person appointed to or employed by any public office or agency may use or authorize the use of any of the facilities of a public office or agency, directly or indirectly,...for the promotion of or opposition to any ballot proposition. Facilities of public office or agency include, but are not limited to, use of stationery, postage, machines, and equipment, use of employees of the office or agency during working hours, vehicles, office space, publications of the office or agency and clientele lists of persons served by the office or agency...”

### **III.**

### **BACKGROUND**

On October 29, 1999, the PDC received a complaint from Ivy Nunez-Sigmon, alleging violations of RCW 42.17.130 by Christine Ohlsen and Greg Lineberry. The complaint noted that a television commercial, running state-wide to oppose Initiative 695, included Tumwater Firefighter Ohlsen and Everett Police Sergeant Lineberry in what appeared to be official uniforms of their respective agencies.

During the course of the investigation, staff determined that the allegations against Mr. Lineberry were without merit. However, the investigation also revealed that Richard Ridgeway, Fire Chief of the Tumwater Fire Department, authorized Firefighter Ohlsen to appear in her standard department firefighter coat and helmet. While not included in the original complaint, staff included Chief Ridgeway as a respondent in this matter.

### **IV.**

### **FACTS**

These charges incorporate the Report of Investigation and all exhibits by reference.

On the November 1999 ballot was a statewide initiative that would, among other things, reduce basic car license fees to \$30. If the measure passed, the fees that were to be used for emergency services, public transportation and road repairs would no longer be available.

The anti-695 group, No on I-695, ran a television advertisement that urged viewers to oppose the initiative. The ad featured Christine Ohlsen, dressed in standard firefighter coat and helmet, telling the viewers that fire services may be cut if the initiative passes. However, the badges and other decal that identified her as a Tumwater firefighter were not displayed.

Ms. Ohlsen was asked by the opposing committee to participate in the ad. She sought advice from Brian Hurley, union representative for the firefighters' local union, and was told that it was permissible for her to wear her official uniform and participate in the advertisement. She did so on her own time.

When interviewed, Chief Ridgeway acknowledged that Mr. Hurley had asked him if Ms. Ohlsen could wear her official uniform when making the commercial. Mr. Ridgeway sought advice from the city's Human Resource Manager and the city administrator. From the conversations, Chief Ridgeway said he felt it was acceptable for Ms. Ohlsen to wear her official uniform for the ad. Chief Ridgeway responded to Mr. Hurley, who then responded to Ms. Ohlsen.

## **V.** **CONCLUSION**

Staff alleges, based on the facts specified in Section IV, Christine Ohlsen violated RCW 42.17.130 by using the facilities of the Tumwater Fire Department when she appeared in the No on I-695 television advertisement wearing her official uniform. Staff also alleges that Chief Richard Ridgeway violated RCW 42.17.130 when he authorized Ms. Ohlsen to wear her uniform while making the television commercial.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2000.

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Susan Harris  
Assistant Director